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ABSTRACT

A study investigated dialect change in a southern Netherlands city, where the dialect spoken is distant from Dutch in phonology, morphology, and lexicon. The dialect is commonly spoken in the city of Maastricht, and is not restricted to one social class. Subjects were 64 native inhabitants of Maastricht from three generations: older (over 55 years), middle (30-45 years), and younger (15-20). The relative prestige of the local dialect and its function as a symbol of local or regional identity was assessed with two measures, including: matched-guise and Likert-type scale. Dialect maintenance and shift on a functional level were investigated in two domain questionnaires, one on reported use and one on subjective suitability of dialect use in a number of situations. Results indicate that the functional loss of the dialect is not keeping pace with the structural loss, with clear differences found between generations. It is suggested that different forces are acting on the two aspects of dialect loss, and that once structural loss has gone so far that the dialect is only a regional style of the standard language, the dialect may become socially marked and lose most of its functions. This language situation and that of other traditional Western European dialect areas are characterized as ambiglossia rather than diglossia. (MSE)

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FUNCTIONAL STABILITY AND STRUCTURAL LEVELLING OF DIALECTS: THE CASE OF MAASTRICHT*

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1. Introduction

In studies of loss and maintenance of minority languages and dialects, it is usually argued that there is a strong relation between the loss of functions and a decreasing use of the language and the one hand, and the loss of structural elements of that language on the other. That functional reduction goes hand in hand with structural reduction has been demonstrated for instance in studies by Haas (1968) on Biloxi, Dorian (1981) on Gaelic, Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter (1977) on Breton and in a lot of other studies on minority languages. Also in studies on dialect levelling, e.g. of Kristensen and Thelander (1984) in Denmark and Sweden, and of Peter Trudgill (1986) in his *Dialects in Contact*, the central presupposition is that dialects change and undergo structural reduction under both functional and linguistic pressure from the standard language.

In the Department of Dialectology at Nijmegen University, the relation between functional and structural dialect loss is now being investigated in a whole range of communities in the Dutch province of Limburg (between Ottersum in the north and Maastricht in the south. Cf. figure 1). Progress reports on this research can be found in Hagen (1986).

The research in Limburg suggests that the relation between functional and structural loss can be rather less straightforward than is gen-

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erally taken for granted. Especially relevant in this respect is the ongoing research into the city dialect of Maastricht (Münstermann and Hagen 1986, Münstermann 1988). We shall present some data drawn from this research. They show only minor changes in the very favourable attitudes towards the dialect, and quite stable patterns of domain use, but, on the other hand, also reveal a substantial loss and reduction on the level of the language structure.

FIGURE 1
MAASTRICHT WITHIN THE NETHERLANDS

As can be seen from fig. 1, the city of Maastricht (with approximately 110,000 inhabitants) is situated in the most southern part of the Netherlands, close to Germany and very close to Belgium. As the most southern part of the Netherlands, Maastricht cherishes a southern, romanic-like and, some say, even a Burgundian image. There are, of course, historical reasons for this rather unique position of Maastricht among the cities of the Netherlands. One of them is that the city, both because of its peripheral Dutch situation, and because of its strategic

and commercial importance, had a rather autonomous cultural development until far into the nineteenth century. Until that time the linguistic situation in the city could roughly be described as di- or triglossic with French and standard Dutch as competing high varieties and the dialect of Maastricht as the common variety.

Nowadays, the dialect spoken in this city is still characterised by considerable linguistic distance from the Dutch language on the levels of phonology, morphology and lexicon. Furthermore, the dialect still has a considerable number of speakers. The use of the dialect is, unlike most city dialects in the Netherlands (cf. Hagen and Giesbers 1988), not limited to one particular social class. In fact, the distribution of the dialect and standard language seems to be functional rather than social.

2. Method

The subjects in this study were 64 inhabitants of Maastricht, all born and raised in this city. The sample was stratified for age, for obvious reasons. There were three generations: an older generation (over 55 years), a middle generation (30-45 years), and a younger generation (15-20 years). Furthermore, the sample was stratified for neighbourhood and sex; but in this presentation we will not go into these last variables.

In the Maastricht study dialect loss was treated as a linguistic phenomenon, as well as a sociological phenomenon. Dialect loss in a linguistic sense was measured by a number of production and acceptability tests, most of them on morphological procedures. These tests can be described as 'direct discrete point tests', (cf. Oxford, 1982). The elicitation procedures used can be compared with those in Greenbaum & Quirk (1970). This implies that they are directed towards the elicitation of variants of concrete variables. As a consequence, there was an almost maximal monitoring by the informants. Therefore, one can say that the tests measure knowledge of the dialect (competence), rather than the actual use of the dialect (performance). In case an original variant of

a variable could not be elicited, this variant was considered unknown and therefore lost.

Dialect loss in the sense of the sociology of language, that is in terms of language shift, means the loss of functions the dialect is used for or considered suitable for. In order to assess the relative prestige of the local dialect as well as its function as a symbol of local or regional identity, the functional analysis started with attitude research. Attitudes toward the Maastricht dialect, the standard language and the dialect community were measured with two attitude measurement techniques. The first was the matched-guise procedure. The informants were asked to evaluate different speakers on a list of personality traits. In fact they heard two speakers and three varieties; of course one speaker spoke Standard Dutch and Maastricht dialect. The second attitude measure was constituted by a Likert-type scaling instrument that contained 15 statements concerning loyalty towards the local dialect and the dialect community. Apart from attitudes, dialect maintenance and dialect shift on the functional level were investigated in two domain questionnaires: one for reported use, and one for subjective suitability of the use of the dialect in a number of situations.

3. Results

3.1 Functional loss

In fig. 2 the results of the matched-guise test are summarized. In this figure the classical pattern of the standard language as the more prestigious variety, and the dialect as the more attractive one, is not confirmed. For the matched speaker the status-items show about the same scores for dialect as for Standard Dutch. The differences between the two are not significant (t-tests). As for the items reflecting social attractiveness, the dialect is clearly evaluated more positively than Standard Dutch. Of the 16 items on the scale, 8 items show significant differences in evaluation between the Standard Dutch version and the dialect version (t-test 5%-level); 7 of these differences are in favour of the dialect. Without exception these items reflect social attractiveness or

integrity, they all have to do with a solidarity dimension. The one item that showed a higher mean score for Standard Dutch is 'leadership', clearly a status item. The other status items show higher scores for Standard Dutch as well, but the differences found are not significant.

For the second attitude measure, directed towards statements concerning loyalty towards the dialect and the dialect community, factor analysis was used, in order to check if the dimensions thought of in

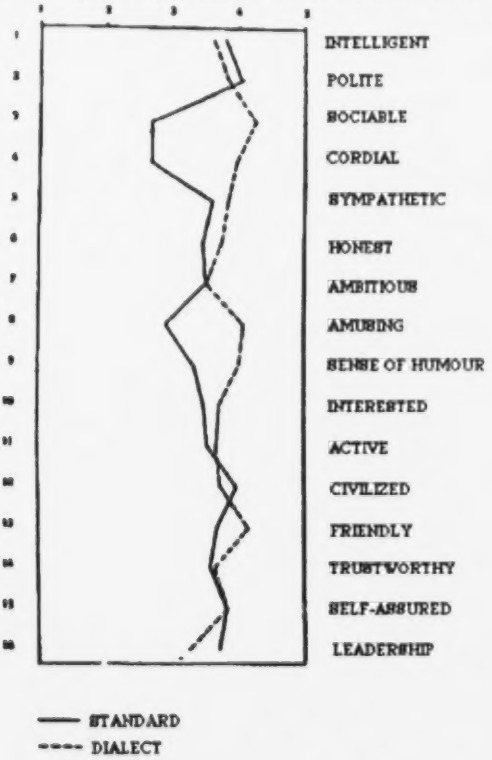

FIGURE 2
SCALING PATTERN ON THE MATCHED-GUISE TEST (FIVE-POINT SCALE)

advance were indeed confirmed by the outcome of factor analysis. Three factors were extracted. The first factor contained statements on the aesthetic value of the dialect. The second factor was constituted by statements on dialect ideology. The third factor reflected loyalty towards the city and the dialect community. The summed scores for the factors were divided by the number of items in the summation, so that the scores are between 1 and 5, like the original five-point-scale scores. The mean scores are: 4.37 for the aesthetic judgment, 3.65 for ideology, and 4.20 for loyalty. These mean scores are fairly high; it is clear that the subjects have positive attitudes towards the dialect and the community. This finding confirms the outcomes of the matched-guise test.

The situations used in the two domain questionnaires could be grouped on three dimensions after factor analysis. The dimensions were labeled 'instrumentalism', 'family' and 'solidarity'. 'Instrumentalism' covers a group of situations of a transactional or formal nature. 'Solidarity' is a label for typical in-group situations. One might expect 'family' to be included in the solidarity factor, but, probably because of extremely high scores with consequently lower variance, the family situations constituted a separate factor.

As can be seen from fig. 3A on reported use, there is a considerable amount of use of dialect in the groups of domains labelled 'family' and 'solidarity' (the maximum use is 5!). There is only a slight decrease in use per generation. On the 'instrumentalism' dimension however the generation effect is significant. Since the 'instrumentalism' factor contains intergroup and transactional situations also with non-native or removed inhabitants or with visitors of Maastricht, and since these situations have become more frequent, the decrease of dialect in these domains is not surprising. In spite of a certain decline, the general position of the dialect in a dominance configuration is still quite strong.

As can be seen, fig. 3B shows that the scores for the suitability of dialect use are also quite high for the factors 'solidarity' and 'family'. The results however are somewhat more complicated than the reported use scores, especially on the 'family' factor. Here, a clear curvilinear pattern emerges, which means that the middle generation considers di-

alect less suitable for use in family situations than the other two generations. Since the middle generation is the generation with children who are still growing up, the question of the choice of variety is more salient there than in the other generations. The greater involvement of the middle generation in exactly this question most probably requires a more considered judgment.

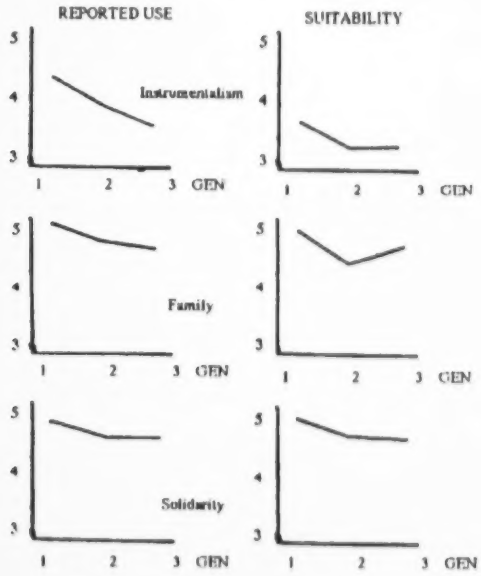

FIGURE 3

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF SCORES ON THE DOMAIN QUESTIONNAIRES FOR REPORTED USE (3A) AND SUITABILITY(3B) IN THREE GENERATIONS

We will not got into a comparison between the reported use scores and the suitability scores, but restrict ourselves to the conclusion that both types of scores indicate that, in general, the position of the dialect in Maastricht is still very strong.

3.2 Structural loss

As has been indicated above, the loss of typical dialect structures was also investigated in a series of elicitation and acceptability tests. Here we will only briefly present results from some of the elicitation tests on dialect morphology. Each of the investigated morphological variables was represented by an average of 10 test items. Results are presented in table 1. The scores were calculated so that 1 is the theoretical maximum score and 0 the minimum. The table shows that even the oldest generation as a group never reaches the theoretical maximum of the NORMS-speaker; therefore the best empirical point of reference for the loss process is the oldest age group in the sample (for the problem of the 'point of reference' in language loss research, see Jaspaert, Kroon & Van Hout 1986).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Old	0.72	0.75	0.98	0.77	0.11	0.48	0.80	0.33
Middle	0.42	0.47	0.79	0.77	0.12	0.61	0.61	0.30
Young	0.47	0.39	0.64	0.54	0.05	0.37	0.47	0.00

Table 1. Competence scores for eight morphological dialect variables in three generations

The first test has to do with the grammatical gender of nouns. The Maastricht Dialect (MD) grammar has an explicit three-gender system. Standard Dutch (SD) officially has a three gender system as well, but actually the maximum differentiation in the variable under investigation is only twofold. The MD-nouns in the test were chosen for having a gender differing from that of their SD-equivalents.

1. In the first part a gender-specific *demonstrative* pronoun had to be filled in in the MD-sentence.

MD	*Dat* febrik is aajt (neuter demonstrative) 'That factory is old'	SD	*Die* fabriek is oud (masculine demonstrative)

2. In the second context an *adjective* to the same nouns had to be filled in; the inflexion of the adjective also shows grammatical gender of the nouns.

MD	't Is 'n *aw* febrik (neuter adjective) 'It is an old factory'	SD	't is 'n *oude* fabriek (masculine adjective)

3. The third part of the gender-test concerns *pronominal reference* of the type:

MD	Hej is en nuij taofel. Wie vinste *ze*? (feminine personal pronoun) 'Here is a new table. How do you find it?'	SD	Hier is een nieuwe tafel. Hoe vind je *hem*? (masculine personal pronoun)

Results on the gender variables (table 1, column 1-3) show that for the first two contexts there is a significant decrease of the use of the genuine dialect gender in the middle and younger generations. It is rather surprising that pronominal reference seems to be less vulnerable.

4. The next variable is the vowel mutation in 2nd and 3rd person singular in the present tense of strong verbs, a phenomenon unknown to Standard Dutch; it is comparable to the A-Umlaut rule or the E-I-Wechsel in German. In 10 sentences forms with vowel mutation in the dialect had to be filled in.

vallen	:	MD	diech *vels*	SD	jij *valt*
(infinitive)	:		(2 person sg.)		
to fall			*you fall*		

Here too the attrition is evident (table 1, column 4). Yet, it starts only after the middle generation, so it is of recent date.

Variables 5 to 8 have to do with principles of morphological derivation for nouns and adjectives.

5. The first of these concerns the principle of the derivation of nouns from verb-stems by prefix *ge-* and suffix *-s*, which has a function comparable to that of substantised *-ing* forms in English. The Standard Dutch equivalent is prefix *ge* + verb-stem, so the morphological difference with the original dialect form is only the absence of suffix *-s*.

MD *gesjriews* SD *geschreeuw*
'shouting'

Apparently, the contrast between dialect and Standard Dutch has almost completely disappeared (cf. table 1, column 5). This is quite imaginable if we assume that similarity in rules between two systems will provoke levelling. On the other hand, highly transparent rules are supposed to be rather resistant. A regular derivational principle like *ge*+stem+*s* certainly looks transparent. These two tendencies seem to be in conflict with one another here, and evidently similarity is the strongest. Yet we could also assume that similarity was helped in this case by the fact that the Standard Dutch derivation is simpler, because only one prefix is used, and therefore is more attractive.

6. The second derivational principle derives adjectives from verb stems with the suffix *-etig*. One SD equivalent is *erig*, but in the dialect the forms may also have the same function as the SD present participle on *-end*.

MD *gleujetig* SD *gloeiend*
'glowing'

Table 1, column 6 shows that the scores spread around the middle, in other words, the use of the dialect suffix has become optional in the whole language community.

7. The third principle is derivation of nouns from adjectives with the suffix *-igheid*, corresponding to Standard Dutch *-heid* and something like English *-ness*.

MD	*meujigheid* 'tiredness'	SD	*moeheid*

This principle shows significant loss over the three generations. Nevertheless, the use in the younger generation still demonstrates optionality of the use of the dialect suffix. So, in general this principle proves to be more resistant than the other two. Probably this is due to the fact that the geographical spread of the principle is much wider than that of the other derivational variables discussed here. Not only do most dialects in the province of Limburg use this derivation, but also most Brabantine dialects. The hypotheses that more widely spread features are more resistant in processes of dialect loss is obvious from Thelander's research on dialect levelling in Sweden (cf. Thelander 1982). This finding seems to be confirmed by our data.

8. The last of the four derivational principles goes back to the Middle Dutch period. It is the derivation of nouns indicating female persons, from nouns on suffix *-er* or *-aar* indicating male persons, by adding the suffix *-se*.

MD	*naober - naoberse* (masc.) (femin.) 'neighbour - neighbour's wife'	SD	*buurman - buurvrouw* (masc.) (femin.)

Clearly this derivational principle is completely lost, as can be seen from the scores of the younger generation in table 1, column 8. Also the knowledge of the principle in the middle and older generation was not very convincing, so that we can assume that the principle has been optional for a long time.

These and other results of the structural dialect loss tests show that dialect loss is a real phenomenon in Maastricht. Not only do the re-

sults for most of the presented linguistic variables differ substantially from the theoretical maximum, but clear differences between generations have also been found. The same holds for most of the other variables in the study, that are not discussed in this paper.

4. Conclusion and discussion

As can be seen from the results presented in this paper, the functional loss of the dialect does not keep pace with the structural loss. Correlations between the linguistic variables and for instance the domain variables are extremely low. Only the gender system variables and the domain variables show correlations between .30 and .40, which is still not much if we consider the variance just discussed. Not more than 9 - 16% of the variance in the gender system variables can be explained by the degree of dialect use or subjective suitability of dialect use.

How can we explain this apparent lack of relation between functional and structural loss? First we can assume that the relation between the two processes is not a linear one, as is presupposed in the Pearson correlation coefficient. A linear relation would mean that both processes take place not only simultaneously, but also at the same pace. Evidently, the structural loss in Maastricht is at this moment way ahead on the functional loss, which does not mean of course that both processes are completely independent. A possible explanation is that the two processes of dialect loss are caused by different forces that are not necessarily related to one another. Structural loss may well be caused simply by the increasing exposure of the dialect to the standard language (school, media, increasing mobility etc.). Functional loss will increase if the dialect is not considered suitable for use any more in a particular set of situations. This of course is also a matter of the prestige of the dialect in the speech community, which in this case used to be fairly high.

It is quite imaginable that, once structural loss has gone so far that the dialect is only a regional style of the standard language, the dialect

will become socially marked and will lose most of its functions, beginning with the instrumental dimension.

But instead of speculating about the future, let us try to describe the present shape of the dialect-standard situation in Maastricht. For this purpose we refer to fig. 4 which gives an abstract model of the speech repertoire in a dialect-standard situation, after Thelander's research in Burtrask, Sweden (Thelander 1982; Kristensen & Thelander 1984).

D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	Dialect
D	D	D	D	D	S	S	S	S	S	Interlanguage
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	Standard

Figure 4 Dialect-Standard repertoire after Thelander (1982)

It is easy to see that, by using a 50%-criterion for a distinction in dialect- or D-indicators vs. standard- or S-indicators, also from the scores in table 1, the picture emerges of an 'interlanguage' competence, or, in Trudgill's (1986) terminology, an 'interdialect' competence of the Maastricht informants: the number of D-indicators range from 5 out of 8 in the oldest generation, to 2 out of 8 in the youngest generation. Nevertheless, the youngest generation also perceive this interlanguage as dialect use.

Probably the term *ambiglossia* characterizes rather well the language situation in which the speech community clings to the use of two varieties, but at the same time neutralizes and levels structural differences between these varieties (cf. Hagen 1983). Ambiglossia manifests itself on different levels with different phenomena: on the level of the verbal repertoire by frequent code switching and code mixing; on the level of the language variety by interdialect, which, as we have seen, is characterized by frequent substitution of dialect forms by standard language forms; finally, on the level of separate linguistic items, by intermediate forms which result from processes of merging, reduction and simplification. We would like to suggest that 'ambiglossia', much more

than 'diglossia' is quite typical for the present situation in traditional Western European dialect areas.

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